

SURVIVAL COALITION - EDUCATION BUDGET PRIORITIES

STATEMENT

Survival Coalition supports high expectations for all students with disabilities. This means students must be fully included in the general education curriculum and classroom, learning alongside their peers without disabilities. An investment in public education for every child should result in a competitive wage community job or enrollment in postsecondary education after high school along with the skills to live in the community independently with necessary supports.

BACKGROUND

Wisconsin schools support more than 120,000 students with disabilities, approximately 14% of the student population. Unfortunately academic performance of students with disabilities lags significantly behind their peers. In the 2014-15 school year, 8th graders with disabilities were only one-third as likely to be proficient in language arts as their peers; only 1 in 10 8th graders with disabilities were proficient in math. Youth with disabilities who leave school unprepared for adult life are more likely to end up living in poverty and are more reliant on public benefits over their lifetime. Data shows that 22% of Wisconsin youth with disabilities indicate they are not engaged in any activity one year out of school.

Invest in Students with Disabilities

- Increase state special education categorical aid funding to keep pace with local costs. Fund to at least 44% of costs - up from 26%, addressing a decade-long funding freeze.

Require Quality Improvement and Accountability

- Adopt recommendations from the “Seclusion & Restraint in Wisconsin Public School Districts 2013-2014: Miles to Go” report including state level data collection and investment in training on evidence-based crisis intervention practices, particularly in schools and districts with problematic data.
- Direct DPI to develop an internal special education quality improvement plan to address achievement gaps for students with disabilities. Direct DPI to set benchmarks for targeted areas (i.e. academic, disciplinary, least restrictive environment and college/workforce readiness indicators). Annually report progress to the legislature.
- Ensure a uniform definition of disability across all school settings (i.e. public, choice, charter) in the school accountability system. Use federal IDEA definition of disability.
- Develop alternatives to classroom removal and out of school suspensions. Invest in training for schools about best practice methods to achieve change.

- Ensure inclusion of all students with disabilities and schools (including students who attend state funded) County Children with Disabilities Education Boards (CCDEBs) in the statewide accountability system.

Focus on Youth Outcomes

- Require that DPI develop a clear transition policy for students with disabilities over age 14 stating that the preferred outcome of publicly funded education supports is to help the child become gainfully employed in an integrated workplace at or above the minimum wage.
- Support Representative Kulp and Representative Shankland’s Job Developer Proposal to invest in specialized job developers to make school to business connections that secure employment for youth with disabilities. Currently [Assembly Bill 943](#). Request \$1,500,000 GPR in FY17.
- Increase investment in DPI’s new youth transition incentive payment program developed, with support by Representative Rob Brooks, in the last biennial budget. Add \$5.8M in Fiscal Year 2018 to create a youth transition incentive payment (\$1,000/student) to reward schools statewide that demonstrate that students with disabilities had secured jobs or were enrolled in postsecondary education or training one year out of school. (Last year the legislature added only \$100,000 to this fund.)
- Invest in statewide focused technical assistance and monitoring to ensure compliance with federal WIOA law that prohibits schools from contracting with subminimum wage providers. Provide capacity-building funds to districts in need of significant improvement in order to comply.

Support Families to Advocate for Results

- Require that DPI keep a call log database of parent complaints to the special education team to identify trends and concerns across districts.
- Invest in and make families aware of the Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System (WSEMS) to resolve conflict with districts and encourage earlier use of our dispute resolution options.
- Support an expansion of Wisconsin’s Family Medical Leave Act to support leave time for parents to attend IEP and other educational meetings for their child with a disability that typically only occur during school hours. (At least 10 states have laws addressing the need of parents to take leave for educational purposes for limited hours. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx#school>)

Support Students with Mental Health Needs to Succeed

- Increase funding for PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), so more schools can be trained at all three tiers of intervention.

- Create Medicaid reimbursement for consultation and collaboration so clinicians can collaborate with families and schools.
- Fund competitive grants to provide funding for schools to create collaboration amongst schools, families and providers locally, so they can best serve the needs of their students with mental health challenges.